The Middlebury Campus

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Dining Services reports annual $45,000 worth of stolen and broken dining hall dishes

JUNE SU / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Across campus, dining halls are struggling to serve students at full capacity due to an increasing number of dishes leaving the halls and not returning. Dishes are often found broken and damaged in residential areas.

By MET LY
Staff Writer

In the fall 2025 semester, residents of Coffrin Hall received an email from Residential Life informing them that the dorm's only kitchen and lounge would be locked up for the remainder of the semester due to the excessive amount of broken dining hall dishes consistently found in the building's lounge.

"This has been an ongoing issue for years and years," Executive Director of Food Service Operations Dan Detora said in an interview with The Campus, referring to the issue of missing plates, bowls and cups from dining halls.

Latest reports from the custodial team show that students not only remove dishes from the dining hall but also have been throwing them directly into the trash, according to Detora.

"We spend roughly between $35,000 and $45,000 a year on replacing [dining hall dishes]," Detora said. The money is appropriated directly from the annual dining budget.

Shane Lawton, assistant manager of Atwater Dining, noted that the missing dishes have an impact on day-to-day operations.

"Our duty and responsibility, as well as what we want, is to provide students with the best service," Lawton said. "If we don't have the dishes to provide food for them, that makes it kind of difficult."

Lawton noted that last fall, the issue was the worst it had been in his 11 years working at Middlebury.

"We were down to a dozen bowls," Lawton recalled. "I put a sign that said please bring dishes back, what we have is what we have, and we cannot restock the dining room."

Students answered the call, returning with armfuls of

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For visiting J-Term professors, finding housing presents a challenge

By KAI ARROWOOD
Staff Writer

Middlebury's winter term, or J-Term, brings a wide range of visiting instructors to campus each January, from career academics and graduate students to professionals working in the field. While the month offers a unique opportunity to teach an intensive course in Vermont, visiting faculty — particularly those without prior ties to the college — face significant challenges in finding temporary, affordable housing and meeting other costs.

On top of their salaries, typically $4,500 for the winter term, accepted winter faculty receive a $1,000 stipend for housing, but they must secure it themselves in a region already grappling with a housing crisis. Short-term rentals, Airbnbs and hotels cost far more than what the stipend covers; Middlebury's average rent for a studio apartment exceeds $1,700 per month, and most Airbnbs in the area accommodating a single person range from $2,500 to over $9,000 for a month's stay.

"For those of us who are younger in our careers, the money makes a bit more of a difference than perhaps people who are retired or more established," Alessandria Schumacher '17 said, who teaches the course "Environmental Health Decisions."

Alexa Duchenseau, who teaches the course "Endangered Food," paid $4,000 to rent an Airbnb in Salisbury last J-Term. Duchenseau managed to locate an apartment in Bristol this year for $1,600 — though less than half of what she paid for housing last year, the price still exceeds the $1,000 housing stipend.

Beyond high prices, limited availability also plays a role in the visiting instructor's struggle. The college provides the faculty with some housing resources, connecting prospective instructors to websites like FurnishedFinder and Sabbatical Homes, platforms dedicated to traveling professionals and academics in need of a longer-term stay. But when Duchenseau browsed the pages after the college offered her a J-Term position over the summer, all options on both websites were unavailable.

As visiting faculty only stay for a month, the short timeframe makes it difficult to cut a traditional lease or rental agreement. The college did not directly share any information about college-owned rentals with visiting faculty, although the Middlebury handbook states that some college-owned properties are technically available to faculty on a short-term basis.

Some J-Term visiting instructors are able to avoid these challenges because they are either regularly employed by the college in other

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INNOVATION HUB AND OLD STONE MILL EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENT ARTISTS

By COLE CHAUDHARI
Senior News Editor

On Dec. 4, the Elizabeth Hackett Robinson '84 Innovation Hub hosted a student-run Winter Art Market, which brought roughly 10 student artists into the Old Stone Mill and allowed them to display and sell their artwork. The Old Stone Mill, located at 82 Weybridge Street, is an incubator for students to pursue entrepreneurial and artistic projects, according to its website. The event was just one of several that the space has hosted recently, in an effort to ramp up its use on campus.

Sophie Maris '26, a current Creativity & Innovation Intern at the Innovation Hub, told The Campus that some kind of student-run art market had been a hope of hers for a long time.

"I conducted a series of meetings early in the semester, at the Innovation Hub, with the [Old Stone Mill] Board and a few students who had expressed interest in a market in the past. The Innovation Hub provided funding and supplies for the night of the market, and I had the support of Dana, Heather, and the other interns throughout the planning process," Maris wrote.

During the Winter Art Market, the student artists shared the space alongside a group of student musicians. The student artists brought a variety of art forms to their respective vendor stations, including crochet, paintings, ceramics, wood block prints and jewelry.

Leticia Crosby '27.5 sold art at the event, having discovered the opportunity through the Midd Innovation account's Instagram.

"The process for getting a spot at the Market was very simple," Crosby explained. "The organizers were extremely communicative, helpful, and encouraging, which made me feel less nervous about selling my work on campus."

Crosby noted how the in-person opportunity provided a fun change of pace for artists like herself, who typically rely on online stores to sell and distribute their work.

"I found the Winter Art Market really fun. It was my first time selling my work in person, as I usually maintain an online store, so it was definitely a learning experience. I was glad I had the opportunity to feel what it is like

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MIDDLEBURY FACULTY RETAIN MOST FEDERAL RESEARCH GRANTS DESPITE DELAYS AND UNCERTAINTY

QUILAN WANG / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Delays in recieving grants from the Vermont Biomedical Research Network (VBRN) meant less students could be hired as research assistants over the summer.

By HUGO ZHANG
News Editor

Since returning to the White House, President Trump has signed a series of executive orders reshaping federally funded research grants, including those from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). Although several of these orders have been blocked by federal appellate courts, uncertainty continues to linger among Middlebury faculty and across academia more broadly. The orders seek to redirect research priorities and impose a uniform 15% cap on indirect cost rates.

Last February, the college lost a $530,000 Inclusive Excellence Grant after the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) — the largest private funder of biomedical research in the U.S. — decided to end the program following President Trump's executive order restricting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs.

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Middlebury throwers and jumpers excel at Snowflake invitational
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DINING SERVICES REPORTS ANNUAL $45,000 WORTH OF STOLEN AND BROKEN DINING HALL DISHES

Celebrating 20 Years of Composting at Middlebury
Our Recipe
1 part food waste, 3 parts wood chips including campus landscape debris, 1 part horse manure from the Morgan Horse Farm.
Over 300 Tons!
Middlebury composts over 300 tons of pre- and post-consumer waste per year.
Achievement Award
In 2013 Middlebury recieved an EPA Food Recovery Challenge Achievement Award and placed 2nd out of 195 schools in Recyclemania's Food Service Organics category.
Why Compost?
Composting diverts waste from the landfill, saving the college money and reducing emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas that is 20x more potent than carbon dioxide.
Start Composting!
Visit go/compost to learn more and order a compost bin for your office or dorm kitchen.
Knives
Spoons
Knives
Spoons
CAUTION
WET FLOOR
PISO MOJADO

MET LY / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Sailboat sculptures made by Lucy Finkle '27.5. Finkle is also a tenant and board member of the Old Stone Mill.

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dishes.

Another issue that Lawton pointed out was the tendency to take dishes out of one dining hall and return them to a different one.

"All those dishes that go out [of Atwater] end up at Proctor, and they are getting used, [but] we end up having to buy stuff to replace that," Lawton said. "We need to replace approximately 600 units a month." These purchases come only after dining halls exhaust their shared off-site storage.

According to Detora, the issue stems from the college's abundance of outdoor dining spaces across its dining halls. All three dining halls have an outdoor patio accessible during warmer months. Additionally, Proctor has the Woodstove Lounge, while Ross has the Fireplace Lounge outside the main dining space.

At Union College and Siena College, where Detora previously worked, controlled entry and exit points, thanks to a confined dining space made it nearly impossible for dishes to leave the dining halls.

Alvaro Micocci '28, a Residential Assistant (RA) at New Battell, pointed to the pace of campus life as a driving factor.

"We are always rushing places at [Middlebury] because of how intense and packed students' schedules are; therefore, there's a need to drink and eat while walking," Micocci said. He added that the small college atmosphere creates a false sense of informality. "It seems as if you are only borrowing it and taking it 'to your room' from your house's kitchen."

To address the issue, multiple departments, including the student body, Dining Services and Residential Life and Facilities, are at work.

The to-go-box program, where students can buy a carabiner for $5 from Midd Xpress that can be exchanged for plastic reusable takeaway boxes, was initiated by students and implemented in 2019 to mitigate the issue.

"It's a great program," Detora said. "I have to assume that a lot of students don't even know it exists."

Last semester, only 162 carabiners were sold — a figure Detora called "shockingly low."

"It needs better advertisement and marketing for students to know how easy and accessible it is to use," Micocci commented on the matter.

Associate Dean of Students for Residential Life AJ Place said that ResLife has posted signs and tried to maintain active communication about keeping shared spaces clean through floor meetings and emails.

Residence Director (RD) Heather Sitkie noted that students usually receive warning emails from their RD and messages from their RA stating the problem and expected solution before a space is closed.

"Usually, before locking a space, there is a lot of warning given. We are making an ask for people to clean up. We are expressing the concerns about pests and the impact on the community and custodial staff, and we send a lot of prior communication," Sitkie said. "When we are leaving dishes out, a lot of students aren't cleaning them out, so that adds to concerns about attracting pests and rodents."

The Coffrin Lounge closure was a last resort response as the large number of broken dining dishes that were left behind caused excessive work for the custodial staff and made the space dangerous for student use, according to Place.

Also implemented is a dish collection program across campus, where every Monday the custodial staff clears out dishes and emails Dining Services, who sends out a crew to collect them, according to Detora.

Lawton said that the program was piloted at the Bread Loaf School of English over the summer with much success, but staffing issues pose a hurdle to fully implementing it here on the main campus.

At the end of each semester, Dining Services works with Facilities to sweep the campus for leftover dishes. What comes out of it is "boxes and boxes of dirty dishes", where, after sitting in dorms for so long, only 75% of them are salvageable.

The program marks a shift in Dining Services' philosophy from prevention to damage control.

"I think our folks have given up a little bit," Detora said "[We've] tried a lot of different things, and nothing seems to work. We have bigger fish to fry."

Editor's Note: Incoming Managing Editor/Senior Opinions Editor Yuvraj Shah '26 contributed to reporting to this article.

MIDDLEBURY FACULTY RETAIN MOST FEDERAL RESEARCH GRANTS DESPITE DELAYS AND UNCERTAINTY

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Associate Dean of the Sciences Rick Bunt shared that other science-related grants at the college have not been cut. However, delays in renewing existing funds have lasted longer than expected. The Vermont Biomedical Research Network (VBRN) award, funded by the NIH and administered by the University of Vermont, currently supports the research of five Middlebury faculty members. During the most recent five-year renewal cycle that concluded in 2025, approval, which is normally granted in February, was delayed until July. This delay disrupted faculty research plans and reduced the number of summer student research assistant positions since the college was not permitted to use the funds until the end of the summer.

"It's not uncommon for a new administration to impose small delays, but this [VBRN] was much larger than I've ever heard of in the past," Bunt said. "It's disruptive because we lost a lot of summer research that could be funded by [VBRN]."

Beyond final approval from the NIH, the college was not allowed to spend the funds until authorization was granted by the U.S. government's Office of Management and Budget (OMB). For the VBRN award renewal last year, this approval came even later, in September. The five faculty members managed to roll the funds over to the next year or begin spending them in late October.

Director of Grants and Sponsored Programs Chuck Mason echoed this assessment. Lengthening grant application timelines have posed challenges over the past year.

"The most notable change we have observed so far is in the timeline of grant cycles [as] the DOGE [Department of Government Efficiency] cuts eliminated large numbers of staff positions and those folks kept the grant cycles moving," Mason wrote in an email to The Campus. "We are seeing a backlog of pending proposals as the system equilibrates, and funding decisions are taking longer than usual."

Mason said that the humanities and federally funded DEI-related research are more vulnerable in the current political climate than the grants in the sciences.

"The humanities are potentially more vulnerable to budget cuts and any research involving DEI will not be funded," Mason wrote. "It is possible that changes in the peer review process could impact our efforts in STEM (NSF and NIH) but at this time it is too early to tell."

Bunt noted that the main challenge now is not keeping previously secured funds, but acquiring new funding. Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Statistics Jennifer Crodelle, who was awarded NIH and NSF grants last semester, was surprised to receive the funding and shared the sentiment of uncertainty.

"I ended up submitting the grant applications with zero expectation that I would get them," Crodelle said. "Hearing those stories [people's funds were cut or held] while applying was pretty disheartening."

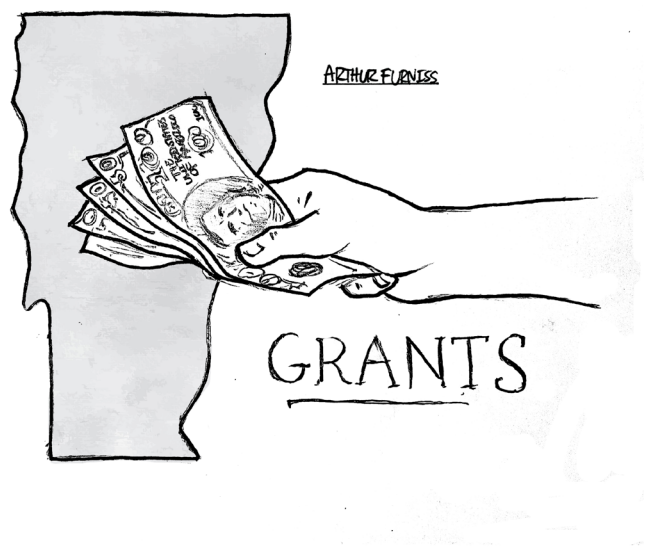
After her NSF-funded postdoctoral work prior to Middlebury at the Courant Institute at New York University and VBRN-supported research since joining the college, this was Crodelle's first time applying for federal grants on her own.

"I had colleagues who were going to apply for [NIH and NSF grants]. They just got cut in the middle of grant preparation, which actually takes months and months of work to justify your life's work to somebody," she said. "And right before they hit submit, they just can't get access to the portal. [NIH and NSF]'re just not funding that anymore."

Crodelle added that she had heard of rare cases at other schools where funding was cut even after grants had been approved.

"They got the grant, they're starting the research, and then they can't access some money anymore," Crodelle said.

Federal grants include solicited categories, which require applicants to respond to agency-defined priorities, and unsolicited categories, which allow researchers to pursue their own ideas. Solicited projects can be canceled or adjusted when an administration's priorities shift. Still, Crodelle worries about the risk of losing the grant in the future if the administration further changes its stance toward research.



"My NSF grant is through this EPSCoR program [Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research], which is for underfunded states like Vermont. I thought for sure that was going to be cut, and it wasn't," Crodelle said. "But I have this constant fear that it's just going to be taken away if the administration one day decides, 'We don't care about Vermont anymore, we don't care about math or neuroscience, and we're just going to take that money back.'"

For liberal arts colleges such as Middlebury, Crodelle said the impact on faculty has been less severe than at research-driven institutions. At research universities, faculty salaries typically depend on grant funding. Most Middlebury faculty are paid a contracted salary for nine months of work, and research grants can allow them to earn additional compensation over the summer.

FOR VISITING J-TERM PROFESSORS, FINDING HOUSING PRESENTS A CHALLENGE

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capacities, residents of the surrounding region, or alumni with prior connections to the area. Schumacher was able to find housing in the residence of a friend's parents. Connor Williams '08.5, who teaches "Catastrophic Memories," commutes from across Lake Champlain.

Duchenseau and Schumacher pay rent for both their Middlebury accommodations and their actual apartments while teaching during J-Term. Between gas expenses and rent for not one but two housing options, the stipend barely covers instructors' expenses, if at all.

The opportunity to teach during J-Term is enough of a motivator for visiting faculty, despite the difficulties of finding a place to stay. Duchenseau is a current fifth-year Anthropology PhD candidate at Yale University, and she said that teaching at Middlebury gives her a leg up on other aspiring professors.

"People are really searching for opportunities to independently teach courses," she said.

Williams, despite having an accomplished academic career, returns to Middlebury out of love for the area and for the opportunity to continue contributing to the Middlebury education.

"What I've done in my career is due to literal lessons I learned from many faculty who are still at Middlebury," Williams said. "To become a part-time colleague of theirs is just an incredible privilege."

As students and faculty enjoy a month of unique courses and fun winter activities, most visiting professors seem to view their housing struggles as a worthy sacrifice, but costs and housing remain a burden and barrier.

RACHELLE TALBERT / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Some college-owned housing options, including these apartments on South Main Street, are offered to professors.

Innovation Hub and Old Stone Mill expand opportunities for student artists

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to sell in person at a market of that style," Crosby wrote.

Lucy Finkle '27.5 also sold her art at the Winter Art Market, and echoed Crosby's gratitude for the opportunity it provided student artists.

"I loved the Winter Art Market and felt like it was very successful. It was such a fun way to showcase what amazing things Middlebury students are working on and invite the community into the space. Artists had the opportunity to sell their work, which allowed students to support one other while shopping for unique holiday gifts," Finkle wrote.

Finkle has additional experience with the Old Stone Mill and the Innovation Hub as a member of the board and as an official tenant of the Old Stone Mill. She uses the space to fulfill orders for her small business, Lucy Sails, where she creates custom driftwood sailboats — an operation she's been running since she was 11 years old.

"Having access to a workspace, storage, and a creative environment outside of my dorm has given me the opportunity to work on something non-academic that I'm passionate about," Finkle said.

Annika Milliman '25.5 sold her lino prints at the market, the first opportunity she has had to publicly display and sell her artwork. All 30 of the prints she brought were sold.

"I thought it was really cool, I've never sold my stuff before, so it was a cool experience to get to try that out," Milliman said. "It felt like an easy way to put myself out there."

The Winter Art Market was the fruition of just one of the many ideas Maris and other Innovation Hub interns and staff members have been working on, and the fall semester saw a busy list of engagements for the Innovation Hub. Other projects included TEDx Middlebury, the Gear Repair workshops, and Maine Gearshare. The M Gallery was also revived recently in the Old Stone Mill Space, and MiddCAT hosted a painting event there in the fall.

Looking forward to the spring semester, Maris hopes that more students will continue to learn about the OSM and engage with it, as tenants or visitors.

"I would like to host some sort of casual lecture/cozy chat series in the OSM during cold winter evenings, and we've talked about getting more student bands into the space. Many students didn't know that the OSM existed until recently, let alone that they can apply for and get free studio space, so I hope more students apply to be tenants. The Hub sponsors student creative projects through the Tree House Fund, so I look forward to what people might want to pursue in the spring," Maris wrote.

Editor's Note: Editor-in-Chief Madeleine Kaptein '25.5 contributed reporting to this article.

COLE CHAUDHARI / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Sailboat sculptures made by Lucy Finkle '27.5. Finkle is also a tenant and board member of the Old Stone Mill.

COLE CHAUDHARI / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Student vendors at the Winter Art Market on Dec. 4.

COLE CHAUDHARI / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Block prints by Olivia Maloney '26

DOMINO'S PIZZA ADDS TO LIMITED LATE-NIGHT FOOD OPTIONS FOR MIDDLEBURY STUDENTS

By DYLAN MCGINTY
Staff Writer

Domino's Pizza opened a new location in Middlebury at 40 Court Street on Dec. 29, offering a new spot for late-night food and delivery for students and town residents. The Domino's is open from 10:30 a.m. to 12 a.m. during weekdays, and remains open until as late as 1 a.m. on weekends. The location, directly adjacent to Kinney Drugs, was formerly a Subway and has sat as a vacant lot since the sandwich chain closed in February 2025.

Middlebury students have few options for ordering food at night. The Grille, the on-campus restaurant open from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m., only operates Wednesday through Sunday. The addition of the Domino's creates potential for competition in the late-night food market, as Middlebury students find themselves with an additional, cheaper option.

Some students have commented on the prices at the Grille being expensive compared to other schools' on-campus options.

"It's clear the prices are too high at The Grille now," Andrew Van Dyke '29 said.

Domino's provides a more cost-effective option than other local pizza shops. While the chain sells a 14-inch pizza for $15, Green Peppers prices its 14-inch cheese pizza at $17 and Nino's Middlebury sells its 14-inch Sicilian cheese pie pizza for $19.99.

This development is preceded by a long line of attempts to supply Middlebury students with after-hours sustenance. In the previous academic year, MiddDash, founded by Benjamin Arias '28 and Arthur Gomes '28, pioneered a delivery service in which students delivered food from the Grille to dorms. Despite the program's success, this service was terminated at the beginning of the 2025-26 academic year.

To respond to continued student pleas for late-night food, the SGA has repeatedly reopened Ross Dining Hall for "10 O'clock Ross" from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m. on certain weekday nights, offering a variety of breakfast items and snack options such as bagels, Green Mountain cream cheese, Oreo cookies, and Cheerios. But some students have considered this to be insufficient.

"I wish they had more options," Aaron Cho '29 said. "I was a little disappointed by the selection at first, especially given the way it was advertised."

Students with hectic schedules have found themselves staying up late into the night with few options for food.

DYLAN MCGINTY / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Over winter break, Domino's Pizza opend a location next to Kinney's.

"I believe Domino's is a game-changer for the Middlebury food scene," Tucker Bernon '29 said. "To my knowledge, it's the only restaurant that delivers, and it's one of three fast food places in the town." Domino's joins McDonald's and Dunkin' Donuts as the town's fast-food chain food options.

Domino's, with its delivery service, has bridged the gap between students and late-night fare, tapping into a market with very high reward.

"Business has been crazy," Heath Mann, one of the managers at Domino's said. "We've been going nonstop Thursday through Sunday."

The Domino's car is becoming a very common sight around the campus, as students immediately made use of the new delivery service.

Inside Edgewater Gallery's evolving vision for the Middlebury art scene

By DYLAN MCGINTY
Staff Writer

Edgewater Gallery, a dual-site gallery located in the heart of downtown Middlebury, is at the forefront of the town's art scene. As visitors come from out of state to peruse the art collection, the gallery has become a draw for tourists in Addison County.

The Edgewater Gallery's exhibition schedule over the past several months has remained full. Beginning in November and extending into 2026, the gallery has presented a range of works centered on impressions and small-scale pieces, featuring contributions from more than 12 artists based locally and throughout the region.

Several of the impressions shown at the exhibitions were made by three printmakers — Matt Brown, Daryl Storrs, and William Hays — at one of the two galleries. The artists can deliver multiple impression images, making their work more affordable and accessible than other artworks. At an opening reception on Nov. 8, the artists hosted a panel talk in which they discussed their techniques, each one unique in style and process. One of the gallery's goals is to incorporate more interactive experiences into its programming, opening up dialogue with the artists.

Edgewater was founded in 2009 with the goal of continuing the legacy of Frog Hollow Craft Center, which relocated to Burlington, in promoting local art culture. It maintains relationships with many of the artists who produced artwork for the previous gallery, offering a space for art appreciation and experimentation.

Edgewater operates two galleries in Middlebury: Edgewater on the Green and Edgewater on the Falls.

The Mill Street location, where Edgewater on the Falls is located today, was purchased by the gallery's owner, George Dorsey, in 2008 when Frog Hollow Craft Center relocated. The building had hosted a budding art community for three generations, with a community-based structure that included a ceramics display and a metal shop that attracted local artists.

Edgewater purchased its second location on Main Street in 2015, converting the former Ski haus into a new gallery which offered ample space to organize its collection. Recently, with a change in management, Edgewater has focused on emphasizing the aesthetic differences between the two locations and further curating and enriching its offerings.

Edgewater on the Green currently houses a variety of works, from bronze statues to oil canvases. Gallery director Shaena Neal aims to create an intuitive flow throughout the rooms, with each piece in dialogue with the next.

"It's interesting finding out which artists work well together and pairing their works here in the gallery," Neal said.

With the former gallery director, Theresa Harris, retiring last year, Neal has spent much of this year meeting with the long roster of artists affiliated with Edgewater and discussing how she can help further expand their representation in the collection. Neal, who previously ran a gallery in her home state of Kentucky, is eager to introduce new styles to the gallery that are not currently in the selection.

The process of selecting new artists is arduous, as Edgewater's curators often find themselves forced to pick two or three artists from a pool of up to 200.

"[Picking artists is] sort of, one, who you believe in, but also the balancing act of who makes really wonderful work that also can sell in the market you're in. Something that sells in New York City wouldn't necessarily sell here," Neal said.

Edgewater Gallery's landscape pieces are among its most popular, with depictions of both local and national nature scenes. One piece, the gallery's largest, depicts Montana's vast, open scenery in an imposing frame. Neal aims to broaden the current market's palates.

DYLAN MCGINTY / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

"We are trying to push boundaries – we'll always have landscapes, we'll always have barns; you have to cater to the market, but someone might come in looking for a landscape and see something abstract and be surprised," Neal said.

One of the gallery's organizational goals is to promote local artists, many of whom have been providing works to Edgewater, and formerly the Frog Hollow Craft Center, for decades.

One such example is Rory Jackson, nephew of artist Woody Jackson, a Middlebury graduate who designed the Ben & Jerry's logo. Since his relocation to Vermont, Rory Jackson has become one of the state's most beloved artists. Edgewater has recently signed a deal with Jackson to exclusively showcase his art, with his pieces delivered from Montana for presentation in Middlebury.

One Martha's Vineyard-based artist, Jay Lagemann, has his bronze statues on display at the gallery. Lagemann, who produces sculptures on display nationwide, adds a curious addition to the gallery, which contains a large number of nature-focused artworks.

Edgewater aims to add larger sculptures to its collection, but is constrained by its gallery space. Recently, they collaborated with Sunrise Orchards, a family-owned and operated apple farm in Cornwall, to put Lagemann's larger pieces on display.

The gallery is currently working on its plan for 2026, which Neal hopes will incorporate more interactive experiences and programming modeled in their fall panel. According to its website, Edgewater on the Green accepted submissions until Jan. 15 for an upcoming exhibit titled "The Work of Paper." Opening on Feb. 26, "The Work of Paper" invites artists to submit work that explores paper as a material or concept.

Heather Viens, a gallery assistant, emphasized that the gallery welcomes everyone to visit Edgewater and view its display.

"Showings are free and open to anyone," Viens said. "Come by and learn something new."

DYLAN MCGINTY / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
A sculture displayed inside Edgewater's venue on Main Street.

Students engage with Addison County through community service programs

By YUVRAJ SHAH & AGNES WANG
Managing Editor & Local Editor

Middlebury College students complete over 100,000 hours of community service each year in the town of Middlebury and Addison County through on- and off-campus activities.

At the heart of the college's outreach efforts are the Community Engagement Organizations (CEOs). These student-led groups coordinate initiatives to meet community needs, including projects ranging from student support and community building to enhancing civic life and providing emergency response services.

One of the most direct ways for students to connect with Addison County is through mentorship clubs that seek to develop long-term relationships with the community. Community Friends, for instance, matches Middlebury students with children ages six to 12 for weekly one-on-one hangouts.

"My favorite thing about community friends is being able to connect with the local community and other students. Families from all different backgrounds participate in the program, and it's a pretty comprehensive cross-section of Addison County," Sarah Connolly '26 said. "Mentees get unlimited free access to the dining halls and school resources with their mentors, so that helps with access to nutrition, library resources, the athletic center, etc. that they may not have any sort of access to otherwise."

Each semester, the organization hosts a "Match Day," where new mentors meet their mentees and the mentee's parents for the first time, marking the start of relationships that typically last through the students' time in college.

"My community friend is genuinely one of my best friends. She reminds me a lot of myself when I was her age, and getting to spend time with her and her family has made me feel more at home at Middlebury. I kept in touch with her while I was abroad, made it to her elementary school graduation, had dinner with her family once or twice a semester, and made time to come up to Midd to go see movies with her over the summer," Connolly said.

For Middlebury students, Community Friends also offers a chance to spend some time away from the college campus environment.

"I think my favorite thing is the fact that it's two hours a week where I don't need to think about any school or personal stress/obligations, because my time is completely dedicated to making sure we're having fun," Neel Shah '26 said. "It's great to disconnect for a second and truly give my time and energy to something outside of myself."

Sibling to Sibling (Sib2Sib) also matches Middlebury students with young people in Addison County, but focuses on middle school students and group bonding. Student volunteers in this program gather weekly to devise programming for local teens, creating bonds and friendships that last throughout their time at Middlebury.

"My favorite thing about Sib2Sib is making close relationships with the children and watching the children grow over time," Former Sib2Sib president Sadie Sadler '26 said. "It feels so nice when they warm up to you and want to give you a hug every time you see them."

Sib2Sib also aims to create events that not only allow for social interaction but also teach essential life skills for the children.

"It offers great mentorship to middle schoolers and gives children from different middle schools in Addison County a chance to connect and have fun with one another," Sadler said.

CEOs like Sib2Sib can also offer event management experience.

"It's always intriguing to watch the kids interact with one another — how they form groups, and the tone of voice they use with each other. It adds another challenge to hosting events, making sure that everyone gets along," vice president of Sib2Sib Sirin Labbar '28 said.

COURTESY PHOTO / COMMUNITY FRIENDS

Community Friends board photo at their fall 2025 'match-day' event.

Some CEOs, such as the Page One Literacy Project, focus on providing academic support to local children through reading and craft activities.

"I believe Page One helps grow a love of reading and art among elementary schoolers in town and gives them an opportunity to be creative and hands-on," former Page One president Sadler said.

"I've always loved reading and children, so Page One was a no-brainer for me. Reading each week and seeing the children's faces during a dramatic moment is immensely fulfilling for me," Co-President of Page One Jude Kuykendall '28 said. "The entire process has helped me learn about strengths I never knew I had, sustaining the childlike room to dream about the world when I return to campus."

"I'm not a full-time member of Page One, but even when I participate occasionally, it's a great way to connect with the community and help share skills with the youth," Xander Bowles '26 said.

Another CEO, The Charter House Coalition, seeks to be part of community-building initiatives in the town of Middlebury.

"The town has supported the college in a variety of ways, so it's nice to continue these relationships and engage with people," Makalya Reed '26, who has volunteered at The Charter House since the fall of 2022, said.

Participants can contribute not only to initiatives that provide shelter, food, and essential human connection to community members facing difficulties, but also spend time cooking and eating alongside community members using the houses' services.

"I also think it's wonderful that we get to not only cook for them but also eat with them. I think it's very eye-opening, especially as someone from Delaware. I have learnt about the homeless situation in Vermont," Reed said. "There is a liaison between The Charter House and our organisation. She [the liaison] will send us a list of supplies that will be really helpful for them to have in the house."

For students drawn to public service through emergency response, the Middlebury First Responders (MFR) group serves as an accessible entry point.

"MFR offers training for EMTs to keep their certifications, helps reach CPR to those interested, brings in interesting and new topics and gives education about first responder activities in the community," Piper O'Neil '27.5 said. "From MFR, I have been able to apply to the Middlebury Fire Department, which is my favorite thing on campus and is where I have made my best friends."

Often in partnership with local emergency services, the group hosts monthly training sessions covering a wide range of topics, including medical situations, search-and-rescue navigation techniques and firefighting fundamentals.

The college offers a range of CEO opportunities: Students can commit to short-term activities or long-term community-building projects, all aimed at bridging the gap between the campus and the local community.

"[Community Friends] has allowed me to build a life here that doesn't just revolve around student life, and gives me a better sense of the surrounding community that we often feel so distant from on campus," Connolly said.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

MADELEINE KAPTEIN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

On the evening on Jan. 10, leaders of Indivisible Middlebury hosted a candlelight vigil to remember Renee Nicole Good, Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez and others recently harmed by federal immigration violence. A large crowd gathered on Main Street and on the Middlebury Town Green to sing songs, mourn the lost lives and protest ICE's immigration crackdown.

College Democrats and College Republicans: We talked. It was great.

Op-Ed

Erik Ghalib, Joseph Jacobson, Lucas Basham, *and* ***Ignacio N. Gamero*** *are the leaders of the College Democrats and College Repulblicans.* ***Ghalib*** *is a member of the class of 2028.5,* ***Jacobson*** *is a member of the clas of 2027,* ***Basham*** *is a member of the class of 2028, and* ***Gamero*** *is a member of the class of 2026.*

At regular meetings of the College Republicans and the College Democrats, our club members frequently mention a hesitation to voice their true beliefs on campus due to worries about potential social or academic consequences. For all the talk of "safe spaces" in higher education, we can still feel it's a risk to contradict the perceived shared opinion dominating the classroom or the lunch table.

This isn't unique to Middlebury. Political polarization has made authentic discourse harder to find across the U.S. Whether online or in person, it's easy to encase ourselves in personalized echo chambers where complex issues are simple; where it's us vs. them, moral vs. immoral, good vs. evil. But when we think this way — when those who vote differently than we do become "the bad guys" — we begin to believe that they are too misinformed, too misguided, too biased to talk to at all. We give up on finding common ground before even trying. And in doing so, we the people cede our political power.

Politicians, media companies, and interest groups won't save us from polarization. They benefit too much from our division. It's on us to push back in the only way we can: by actively engaging with each other.

With this in mind, before winter break, the College Democrats and College Republicans held our first-ever joint meeting, a forum for civil discourse across political lines. We had no certainty that it would work. On a majority-liberal campus where free speech has often been a flashpoint, would students engage with each other? Would conversation devolve into fighting? Would anyone even show up?

The results, however, surprised us. Attendees filled Hillcrest until we ran out of chairs. Conservatives, liberals, and moderates. The leader of Middlebury's No Kings protest and the writer of an opinion piece opposing it. Students across ages, majors and ideologies.

We had prepared some potential discussion topics, but once we broke into smaller groups, we let the dialogue flow. And it did — dozens of people stayed to continue their conversations for an hour longer than scheduled. We talked about political extremism and culture war issues. We discussed President Trump and his latest priorities. We spoke about future leaders and what's best for America. And we did it all with respect, civility, and a genuine desire to listen to and learn from each other.

Some attendees were club regulars. But many showed up having never attended a political club meeting at all. Those newcomers made it clear to us why they came: for, as one freshman put it, "the freedom to disagree."

College President Ian Baucom vowed in a Sept. 11, 2025, letter to the community that at Middlebury, we will "never seek to close free inquiry, or shut down ideas with which we disagree." At the first College Democrats and College Republicans joint meeting, students came with open minds to have their ideas challenged, not echoed; their horizons broadened, not reinforced. To preserve the great American experiment, we'll need a lot more of that.

Our next College Republicans and College Democrats Joint Meeting will be on Monday, Jan. 19, at 8 p.m. in Hillcrest 103. We hope to see you there. For more information about our clubs, read on.

College Republicans was re-established in 2024 with two core goals: to uphold freedom of speech and to foster genuine academic viewpoint diversity on campus. We are a group of students united by an interest in politics, policy and current events. Our organization hosts weekly meetings, sponsors speakers, volunteers and works to ensure that a wide range of perspectives are heard and thoughtfully engaged with across the college community. Our meetings are grounded in intellectually rigorous, ideologically nuanced discussion, analysis, and debate. Regardless of political affiliation, we welcome any student interested in politics to join us — everyone is encouraged to attend and participate. The Middlebury College Republicans meet on Mondays at 8 p.m. in Axinn 219.

College Democrats brings people together to discuss politics, social issues, and current events. We are firm believers in free speech and welcome students of all political views and levels of knowledge to our meetings. We also bring in political professionals and government officials to let students talk directly with them — not through panels or speeches, but through informal roundtable conversations — about how best to shape our great nation. The Middlebury College Democrats meet on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. in Hillcrest 103.

Editor's Note: Ghalib and Basham lead the College Democrats. Jacobson and Gamero lead the College Republicans.

COURTESY PHOTO / ERIK GHALIB

Students across the ideological spectrum and former Vermont Governor Jim Douglas discussing politics at the first College Republicans and College Democrats Joint Meeting on Nov. 17, 2025.

EIGHTY BILLION: AN EXCERPT FROM "HOW TO WANT BETTER THINGS"

Op-Ed

Sam Loescher *is a member of the class of 2028.5.*

At Middlebury, we talk a lot about systems. In our environmental studies classes, sustainability-focused clubs and everyday conversation, we discuss sustainability, carbon footprints and Energy2028. Yet, every day in our dining halls, we participate in a system that is largely invisible to us.

We go through thousands of pounds of chicken every year. Chicken tenders, chicken sandwiches, stir-fry. A lot of it gets wasted, scraped off plates into compost bins as we rush to our next class. I eat in the dining halls; I'm not here to scold anyone for grabbing lunch. But I think we owe it to ourselves to talk about what those pounds actually represent.

Eighty billion land animals are killed for food every year. To put that in perspective, there are approximately eight billion humans alive today. The number of land animals we slaughter annually is therefore about 10 times the size of the entire human population. Moreover, the total number of humans who have died in all wars in recorded history is estimated at roughly one billion. This means that we kill more land animals for food every five days than have died in all human wars combined.

This horrifying scale makes the assumption that farmed animals are too simple to suffer appealing. But biologically, pain is not an intellectual achievement; you don't need to solve calculus to feel agony. You just need receptors, nerves, and a brain. Every animal we factory farm has all three.

Chickens have pain-processing brain regions just like us. When a chick has her beak seared off with a hot blade at one day old (standard industry practice to prevent compulsive pecking in overcrowded warehouses), she feels it. Brain scans show sustained pain activity for days. She shakes her head repeatedly, a universal reflex to facial trauma. She is then moved to a windowless grow-out house. She has been bred to grow so unnaturally fast that her legs often cannot support her weight. She sits in her own waste, sometimes unable to walk to water, until she is slaughtered at five to seven weeks old.

At the slaughterhouse, line speed dictates everything. Workers shackle birds upside down, often breaking their bones in the rush. They move toward an electrified water bath meant to stun them. But because the line moves so fast, processing up to 175,000 birds a day, that many birds miss the stun. They arrive at the automated throat-cutting blade fully conscious. If they struggle, the blade misses the arteries. These birds enter the scalding tank, meant to loosen feathers, while still alive. They drown and scald simultaneously.

While Middlebury Dining Services sources some of our meat from local farms, much of our chicken is from these factory farms. Every chicken tender in the Ross line represents a bird that went through some version of this. And frankly, it's jarring to realize that we scrape so much of this suffering into the compost bin because we took too much General Tso's.

This system contradicts the very values Middlebury claims to uphold. We worry about public health, yet factory farming is a primary driver of antibiotic resistance. Approximately 70–80% of all antibiotics sold in the U.S. go to animal agriculture — not to treat sick animals, but to prevent disease in filthy conditions. We are effectively funding a public health crisis that the CDC estimates already kills 35,000 Americans annually.

Over 99% of U.S. meat comes from these factories. Even with our dining services working hard to source better options, the scale of the industry makes ethical consumption incredibly difficult. So, what do we do? The problem feels too big for a single student to solve, so many just ignore it. But silence is a choice, too.

I'm not asking for purity, just that we stop looking away. We must collectively acknowledge our responsibility: both for the unfathomable suffering, and for taking steps — even small ones— towards a solution. To start, consider eating a little less meat. Have the veggie burger at the Grille. Skip the chicken tenders when the tofu looks good. If every Middlebury student reduced their meat consumption by just 25%, we'd collectively spare thousands of animals from this system.

And for those thinking about careers after graduation: this is a problem that desperately needs the liberal arts toolkit. We need writers to expose these conditions, policy analysts to model welfare interventions, and lawyers to challenge unconstitutional "ag-gag" laws. We need biologists and chemists working on alternative proteins that can compete on taste and price.

Future generations will look back at the footage of the cages and the scalding tanks. They will see the scale — 80 billion a year — and wonder how we lived with it. The logic of this injustice is identical to so many past practices now viewed as barbaric: we have the power, they have none, it's convenient. Farmed animals have no voice in this system. But we have a choice. Let's use it to make the world slightly less cruel, starting right now.

Ethical journalism at The Campus

Op-Ed

Will Beckerman *is a member of the class of 2026.*

Editor's note: This op-ed references a now-deleted Jan. 7 news article, which reported on circumstances surrounding the death of Lia Smith '26. The paper's executive team decided to make a one-time exception to its strict editorial policy and remove the article after a long discussion and vote by Campus staff. The Campus remains proud of its 120-year history of student-run reporting and of serving as a forum for free and fair speech.

As a close friend of Lia Smith '26, I was experiencing another wave of grief two weeks ago when I had a comforting realization: I did not know how Lia had died, and while I knew the information was available, it hadn't been in the news, so as to distract from her life or blame her, as often happens. As such, I was deeply hurt by The Campus's now-deleted choice to publish the details of Lia's death on Jan. 7, particularly the insensitive manner in which it was written.

The graphic detail was unnecessary and a violation of the second point of The Trevor Project's (an LGBTQ+ advocacy group) guidelines for reporting on suicide, The Campus purported to follow. The presumptions made based on the circumstances of her death, followed immediately by a statement of the college's handbook policy, read as an indictment of Lia. Its primacy rules out any possibility that the article could have had a primary goal of discussing LGBTQ+ suicide rates or gun control, as The Campus later claimed. Overall, the article had the effect of highlighting what Lia had "done wrong" in dying while villainizing her as a potential danger (something we know she was not).

This was a case of unintentional callous reporting from overzealous young journalists. Eager to break a story, they misstepped regarding the norms of ethical journalism as laid out in the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, specifically the provision to minimize harm. This provision states that journalists should: Balance the public's need for information against potential harm or discomfort, show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage, recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast, weigh the consequences of publishing or broadcasting personal information, avoid pandering to lurid curiosity and consider the long-term implications of the extended reach and permanence of publication.

The Campus failed on each of these. There was no public need for the information, and there was high discomfort and harm, as expressed by some of Lia's friends who reached out to have the article taken down. Compassion was not shown for those in mourning; the consequences of demonizing Lia, and trans people by extension, were not considered. The article pandered to lurid curiosity, and the long-term impacts on the narrative of Lia's death were not weighed. Portraying trans people as dangerous plays into the politicized narrative of trans shooters that justifies discrimination and harm against them. The impact of the article, given how it was written, was to villainize and blame Lia and, by extension, trans people, make other trans students feel unsafe on campus and re-traumatize a community still grieving.

Irrespective of these mistakes, The Campus has taken the first step towards making things right by taking down the articles and reconsidering their policies. Their acknowledgement of the unintended effects and the steps to correct them are the first steps toward accountability and transparency, the fourth provision of the SPJ Code of Ethics. The new breaking news policy is a good first step, but further reflection is warranted to grow from this moment. Going forward, all journalists need to be trained on ethical reporting to avoid causing harm as The Campus did in this instance.

J-TERM: SEARCHING FOR VALUE IN DOWNTIME

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

J-Term is a defining aspect of the Middlebury education, encompassing everything it means to be a student here. From skiing at the Snow Bowl to building snowmen on the quad, it is undeniable that the lighter workload and lessened commitments slow down time, paving the way for the serenity that characterizes the coldest month of the year.

Expanding on our last J-Term editorial, where we recapped our favorite and least favorite parts of the month, we want to reflect on how J-Term impacts our Middlebury experience and ways to take advantage of this unique semester.

A break from the average four-course workload is an adjustment, to say the least. The transition from running between classes to only have two meetings a week can come as a complete shock. The intense, rigorous feeling that pervades the campus for most of the year seems to come to a temporary halt. At first, the lack of structure can almost feel restrictive, but as the panic and frenzy of deadlines and final exams quiet, it starts to leave time to enjoy life outside of academics.

J-Term means having more time to spend with friends and to do the things we love that do not involve school, such as knitting, crafting or even watching movies. It provides an opportunity to experience Middlebury in a special way, unattached from the stresses of daily life. J-Term is the month to try new things and go on new adventures, specifically emphasizing the importance of engaging with Vermont's famous winter environment.

In terms of academics, there are a plethora of experiences. Some people work internships, some fulfill distribution credits, and others simply follow their interests. Middlebury offers non-traditional classes that are not normally part of the curriculum, including those taught by visiting professors. These classes include everything from mock trials to trips to the state capital. People have the opportunity to hone in on a specific area of study over the course of a month and become well-acquainted with the area of academia.

Many of us have also noticed a change in our approach to J-Term over the years. As first years, J-Term was the month to try and socialize more at events or via activities such as winter sports without the burden of academics and constant commitments. For many, it became the "most social time" of their lives. The transition to upperclassmen tends to change our values. This uninterrupted social time is still appealing but not necessarily a priority anymore. Many of us who are in our junior or senior years here at Middlebury have noticed that J-Term feels quieter than it used to. Many of us find ourselves spending more time alone, completing the tasks we procrastinate all year, and simply catching up on sleep. That is not to say that one way is better than the other. Instead, it highlights the shift in the way we choose to spend our time and utilize our J-Term.

Despite all of this excitement and newfound downtime, many of us find J-Term to be simultaneously overwhelming. There are such high expectations leading into January, and it is important not to get too concerned about "not taking advantage" or "not doing enough" during the month. J-Term can be a double-edged sword: free time can breed a lack of motivation, and it can start to feel limited. Give yourself grace and lean into what makes J-Term so precious: the freedom.

After all, part of J-Term's charm comes from finding serenity and bliss in slowness. Once J-Term ends, reality will set back in and time will once again speed up. So, we urge you to go explore the town. Sit around a fire with friends. Spend that extra five minutes in the dining hall. Or simply watch the snowflakes fall from your window.

Editor's Note: We are interested in hearing what staff and faculty think about the efficacy of J-Term and its future place at Middlebury. If you have an opinion or something to share, please reach out to The Middlebury Campus.

REMEMBERING CHARLIE KIRK: MAN VS. THE ALGORITHM

Op-Ed

***Zach Marcus** is a member of the class of 2027.*

Right after Charlie Kirk's assassination on Sept. 10, 2025, the internet started showing me his videos. This was, initially, disappointing. After a decade of companionship, I had hoped my phone would have been able to guess that I would find his politics repulsive, his schtick shlocky. But I underestimated the algorithm.

Like any good friend, sometimes it knows what you need better than you do yourself and, much to my surprise, I soon found myself pleasantly entranced whenever one of Kirk's confrontations with some hapless student would pop onto my screen. "Name the five books of the Torah," he'd demand, smugly sitting back as his interlocutor's face flushed red, their mouth agape, incomprehensible drivel eventually spluttering out.

Most of the conversation surrounding Kirk's legacy has focused on his politics, i.e. were the things he said good or bad. Ta-Nehisi Coates, taking the latter view, argued that Kirk "reveled in open bigotry," and that his politics "amounted to little more than a loathing of those whose mere existence provoked his ire." This, while true, is probably the least interesting thing about him. Kirk's politics were conventional throughout his career because his "activism" depended on the largesse of wealthy conservative donors. Two decades ago, when all the energy flooded in from the libertarian wing of the Republican party, Kirk blathered incessantly about free markets and limited government. After Trump won in 2016, Kirk underwent a convenient metamorphosis, adopting nativist-populist branding. The transformation was relatively painless, as Kirk was never really interested in ideas. (In all the videos I've watched, he's never once mentioned any book besides the Bible.) To criticize his ideas, then, is just to bemoan the overall state of conservative politics.

Ezra Klein was on a (slightly) better track when he encouraged us to skip past the nitty-gritty of Kirk's beliefs and examine him abstractly as a political practitioner. "Kirk was practicing politics in exactly the right way," he wrote. "He was showing up to campuses and talking with anyone who would talk to him." Klein's analysis, however, fatally falters because it can't see past the illusion that concealed Kirk's trick: While it looked like he was going around talking to other people, what Kirk was actually doing was talking to a machine. At every college he visited, he recorded his conversations and posted them online — this was the entire point of his campus tours. Kirk was never trying to communicate with other people in real life so much as simulate a particular performance for consumption online.

The simulation is what Kirk was actually good at. Whether consciously or not, he appealed to viewers across the entire ideological spectrum. (From the perspective of an influencer, words like "conservative" or "liberal" refer more to complementary market segments than dueling political ideologies). For conservatives, the consumptive experience was vicarious: a chance to own the libs, to bask in the crowd's adulation while your opponent's argument falls apart like wet paper. For liberal viewers, the pleasure was a bit murkier. Partly, it was cathartic: a small dose of ragebait, a chance to purge the guilt you feel for thinking all those nasty and bigoted things about the nasty bigots. Beyond that, Kirk's clips managed to feel transgressive while subtly reinforcing the archetypal professional-class-liberal's twin tendencies toward self-flagellation and self-flattery: Maybe diversity is a weakness, maybe immigrants don't have a "right" to come here — maybe the problem is that I'm too nice. Kirk, too, got off on these encounters. You don't need to be Freud to grasp the psychoanalytic implications of a college dropout wandering from one university to the next, humiliating the students in order to demonstrate the scaminess of their education.

There was a cost to all of it, though. To be heard online, Kirk had to speak in a way that was easily legible to the machine. Luckily, it's easy to learn how to do that: Every time you talk to it, the internet spits back instant, quantifiable feedback. If the goal is to maximize engagement, you optimize yourself.

One million views when I call undocumented immigrants "criminals"; not so many when I say everyone who smokes weed is lazy. Without even realizing it, everything you want to say becomes what the machine wants you to say; you think you're speaking through it when it's speaking through you. This is why it's inane that the people most eager to canonize Saint Charlie do so on the grounds that he was some paragon of "free speech." Kirk commodified himself and, in doing so, became an object shaped by an incentive structure he didn't control. As Karl Marx pointed out two centuries ago, this is the antithesis of freedom: "The primary freedom of the press lies in not being a trade. The writer who degrades the press into a material means deserves as punishment for this internal unfreedom the external unfreedom of censorship, or rather his very existence in his punishment."

Today, we might say: The political influencer who simulates themselves deserves the loss of it. The world becomes unable to distinguish between the synthetic product on the screen and the person it was scooped out of. Soon, neither can the influencer. Charlie Kirk, the creature of light and pixels, became just as real as Charlie Kirk, the human of flesh and blood.

If you look closely, you can sometimes see the moment when a victim feels the merging of these two entities and frantically tries to escape. Just look at many of Charlie's friends, the other online right-wing propagandists, who have begun hysterically shrieking about literal demons. Tucker Carlson believes he was physically attacked by one. Candace Owens hasn't had any personal encounters but knows they control Israel, Hollywood, and maybe Turning Point U.S.A. That thing on the screen isn't me, they're trying to say. It's possessed. But of course that's you. Your very existence is your punishment.

They say when Charlie died, he looked happy, a knowing half-smile on his face. Like God rescued him. That wouldn't surprise me.

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

The Campus accepts submissions of opinions, reflections and letters to the editor from all members of our community, every week. Pieces from students, staff and faculty are all welcomed for consideration.

Email us at campus@middlebury.edu with your submissions!

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The Campus welcomes letters to the editor at 250 words or less, though longer letters will be considered, or opinions submissions between 700 and 900 words.

To submit an op-ed, learn more about article and op-ed guidelines or receive further guidance, please email campus@middlebury.edu. (Or visit our website to submit an anonymous tip).

@middleburycampus

MAKES YA FEEL: ART FOR THE COLD

By ELLIE TRINKLE
Senior Arts & Culture Editor

SKILES ROBERTS-SALVADOR/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Gallery hoppers, Spotify stalkers, bookworms, Letterboxd users and anyone who enjoys art, this is the place for you. Makes Ya Feel highlights art across all of its mediums, small and large-scale, that (you guessed it) makes ya feel!

One of my favorite songs by the British band Broadcast, "Winter Now," opens with the simple, punchy lyric "Snow lies all around, there's no sense of doubt." While I am currently away from the snowglobe that is Middlebury winter, I still find the lyric resonates even when the ground beneath me is concrete.

The undoubtedly bleak wintertime is perfect for consuming art. Whether in the solace of a cozy room or beneath warm lighting with those you hold dear, art can soothe and inspire us.

So, here is my list of art for the cold. The kind of things I turn to as a reminder that even the grayest-blues of the season can be comforting. And a pro tip: a hot beverage is required to enjoy these to their fullest potential (my favorite is any tea that has plum in it).

Album — Pet Grief by The Radio Dept.

Swedish band The Radio Dept. specializes in hazy, whimsical instrumentals overlaid with vocals so subtle they could be a whisper. They boast references that span across several time periods and genres, such as Frank Sinatra, Saint Etienne and Joy Division.

"Pet Grief" is their second studio album and was released in 2006. While a little rougher around the edges compared to their later releases, I find this album perfect for winter. Though anticlimactic, it's so fuzzy that it almost appears shy, underneath a few layers lie its core — the ability to stand still. In "Pet Grief," time becomes gestures and winter becomes warmer.

Titular track two is a synth-heavy two-step despite its honest lyrics, "You think you know someone, right? Maybe you never did and how that scares you." A contrast which, to me, perfectly encapsulates winter. It's a dance and a lull; everything wonderful and terrifying all wrapped into one.

My favorite track, "A Window," takes a more reserved approach. With a trance-like guitar and simple lyrics, it envelopes you without holding on too tightly. "I don't consider this a chance, or a window. Still proud of it," lead singer Johan Duncanson muses. The song is all about embracing uncertainty, and while winter feels endless, this song helps to remind me that there is so much more ahead.

Other tracks feature similar perceptions. Upbeat "What Will Give" advises you to "Be sensitive. Keep it pure. Be secretive," while "Always a Relief" sits in confusion, wanting "to feel the illusion" and the lush guitar in "Every Time" ping pongs between feelings of guilt and indifference. It is the perfect album to revisit, and I always turn to it when winter has me feeling especially sentimental.

Book — Fantasy: Invention, Creativity, and Imagination in Visual Communications by Bruno Munari

Over the summer, I decided to Over the summer, I decided to take a gamble and judge a book by its cover; a paintbrush whose bristles had been braided with bows attached to the ends. The result was not only deeply thought-provoking but also inspiring.

"Fantasy" is about how Munari views creativity, but it eventually becomes a challenge for his readers to look inward and think about their own creative processes. A large portion is devoted to how children understand creativity and the importance of allowing them to "be" so they can understand the millions of possibilities.

What struck me the most was Munari's definition of fantasy: "Another, more complex, instance of the workings of fantasy, invention, and creativity involves connections between connections." Munari goes on to describe how many different combinations one can make to connect things to one another. Not only is it a rather interesting meditation on creativity, but it also shows how everything is interconnected.

Sometimes I struggle to motivate myself creatively, especially in the winter. But this month, I have found Munari's pages are great ones to look back on. For him, creativity is universally accessible; all that is required is time. Fantasy and creativity are everywhere, he argues, and "A creative person is both a recipient of and a contributor to the culture of a community, flourishing alongside it."

Movie — All We Imagine as Light by Payal Kapadia

While working on my thesis about transportation, a friend recommended I watch this film as a reference. I finally got around to it this month, and was immediately enamored by how alive it is. Set in Mumbai, the film follows two roommates who work as nurses at a local hospital. Prabha is older and is coping with her estranged husband, who lives in Germany, while Anu is younger and navigating what it means to build meaningful relationships.

Beyond the incredibly touching performances, this film also depicts transportation in such an incredible way. Open-air trains and buses not only connect characters to the city, but to one another. Everything ebbs and flows alongside each other, and the result is a film that oozes with compassion even in its subtle moments.

Anu and Prabha giggle, dance, fight and go in circles around each other. Some of their most memorable moments are the mundane ones; the two women admiring a rice cooker, looking out bus windows and speaking softly to each other. Every little act resonates with compassion.

As I wrap up my thesis this January, this film has not only been a great resource, but also a great lesson. When winter chills me with dissonance, this film reminds me that connection is truly everywhere: lLingering within our inanimate objects, seeping out from the people we encounter and woven into the spaces we occupy.

"ENVOYS" AND THE TALE OF AN INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

By ANTHONY CINQUINA
Arts & Culture Editor

I share a wall with Joey Disorbo '25.5, so I know first-hand that those inconceivable work hours stats cited on his film's informational poster board are true: 2000 hours, split across a thin crew. I know it from the many weekends I've seen him holed up in his room editing; I know it from the times I've been called in to give feedback on music, sound design and visual effects; I know it from the piles of props and costumes that fill our basement storage space; and I know it from that winter semester where he was practically invisible on campus.

Disorbo and I are both Super Senior Febs now, but I can remember a pivotal moment in this long, creative journey years back. In our sophomore year, he showed me his proposal to the Middlebury College Curriculum Committee to create his own major as an Independent Scholar.

He was approved by the committee, and so began a long and grueling process which would come to some kind of conclusion at the end of fall 2025.

On Dec. 7, the (near) final cut of Disorbo's feature film, "Envoys", premiered. A crowd of well-dressed students, parents and faculty shuffled into the Sunderland Language Center and across a long red carpet. A poster greeted the audience at the door of Dana Auditorium, breaking down the early creative process, the filming weeks and presenting a rundown of all the work involved in such a gargantuan project. A team of ushers, ticketing attendants, interviewers, photographers and videographers (all students) guided visitors from door to seat — a seamless and overwhelmingly professional process. If I had slipped on the ice and hit my head before entering, I might've believed I was at the opening night in Cannes or Sundance.

"Envoys" is no secret homage to Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," and, by proxy, to Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now".

"In the collapse of a second American civil war, two coalition envoys journey to a remote rebel encampment to deliver a ceasefire ultimatum to its reclusive, fanatical commander," reads the logline. "Envoys" is part speculative fiction, part war drama, part action and part comedy. The range of tone works well; there is enough time and space in the film for the mood to shift naturally, from the goofy Canadian sharpshooters to the eerie and ailing General Kurtz.

Lead actors Jin Lee '25 and Georgia Crosby '25.5 play the pair of military expendables, and are almost at all times onscreen. They have a large load to carry and, for the most part, they carry it well. Lee channels the narrative's intensity, and Crosby captures its necessary subtlety and doubt.

The action sequences feel straight out of a major studio production. The choreography is crisp, the set pieces are menacing and the sound is intense. The costumes and set design are similarly impressive, and certainly punch way above their weight class.

"Envoys" is more of a visceral ride than it is an emotional one. Though you aren't too attached to the characters even by the end, you are certainly swept up by the pacing and the dramatic intensity, especially during the electric final act.

Even disregarding the creative, financial and logistical difficulties inherent to a student project, "Envoys" is an incredible achievement. The acting, the directing, the creative vision, the sound, editing and the spectacle of the event itself were all incredibly impressive, and to think that Disorbo achieved this while also balancing a normal course load and all the other complexities of college life is astounding.

I sat down with Disorbo to gain more insight into the process and learn why and how he made this massive project happen.

Anthony Cinquina: What is it you really want people to know about the project?

Joey Disorbo: I want other people to know that they could do this. I guess that's not the entire reason I did this but that's a pretty large point. I intended to demonstrate that you don't need a department to perform a project like this, you can do it through sheer force of will. I've done this twice now because I've done this in the theater realm too; I wrote and put on my own play, Rospo, and that was something I just put on independently.

The same is true with Envoys: I split from the department and did it myself. And I think any student should never feel like they are boxed in by requirements decided for them by a major. That's what I intended to prove...that you can genuinely just decide what you want to do and do it. You just act.

AC: You've done this twice: the play and now the movie. What has been your experience going through channels other than the formal, official ones to do creative projects?

JD: People are very willing to help you. They're more willing to help you than you might expect. When I did the play, Jim Dougherty in the Theater Department helped us immensely; Similarly for the film, Ethan Murphy in the Film Department helped me on the technical side in the end. He didn't have to do that, but he just did it. We got the most help from Media Services in Davis, Joe DeFeliece was generous with our filming equipment for months, and Johnny Meli saved my sorry soul during the test screenings in late December.

Generally if you show people you are serious, they want to help you however they can. It's one thing if you go there and you're not prepared and not serious, but if you do your homework and you show up ready there's very little reason to say 'no'.

AC: Why a film? Was that the plan from the very beginning?

JD: In my major, I gave myself the option to do a full length theater play or a full length feature film as my thesis... I had done the play, and knew I could do another. But I wanted to push myself and always knew that film is a medium that is more malleable by an independent creative force. So because I wrote [the film], directed it, and importantly did all the post production, I basically got to shape every frame.

Why film? I think I've always wanted to do it. When I was a freshman in high school I was already writing scripts for tentative films. Of course they were all terrible. But I made a couple of shorts in high school, and I responded well to the intensity of the filmmaking process.

AC: Did the idea come about only when you started the writing process? Was there some version of the story in your head before that?

JD: Well it starts with music. When I listen to music I'm presented with sequences that are like short videos or scenes. So that comes to me before I write anything; there are no words. So the idea for this really started from music, from the music that is in the film. I wrote the film starting with John Adams, specifically his "Shaker Loops" and "Harmonielehre." So I listen to those and I see the scenes, before I even know what the movie is about.

AC: So this was even before you had thoughts of basing the movie on "Heart of Darkness?"

JD: Yes, yes. I mean just the sequences themselves are not enough for a movie. I was profoundly affected by "Heart of Darkness." I wanted to confront it, and so I chose to loosely adapt the novella to these images. Even my play, it was based on a novel: "A Handful of Dust" by Evelyn Waugh. The play continues off right from the end of the Waugh narrative. And I've noticed that a trend for me is to be directly and openly in conversation with classic works. I find it necessary, because the classics are classics for a reason. If we're not in dialogue with them we're not using them the right way.

Because I'm not just coming up with this [story], this is all derived from other things I've encountered in my life. The first maturity for a thinking person is to understand that they don't have original ideas, they have original syntheses of other people's ideas.

AC: What state is the film in now? Are you working on it? Where will it go from here?

JD: State of Sisyphus... Right now I'm doing another polish pass as we're talking. I'm going to attempt to submit it to festivals. I want to see how people receive it out of the Middlebury sphere. It's bound to leave a specific impression on the Middlebury audience because its Middlebury locations with Middlebury people. But to people who don't know anything about Middlebury I hope it holds up, and that's the intention behind that.

AC: Do you have a favorite part of the movie? A favorite scene, character, idea?

JD: My favorite part is the climax with the John Adams' Shaker Loops, what I call Coraline's Reversal. In order to complete her journey, Coraline needs to surrender to the violent identity that she has tried for years to suffocate, and this requires a radical self-acceptance. Coraline metabolizes her guilt, and is reborn. She kicks her head back with a deep breath, and for just this moment, she experiences true freedom, which is freedom from morality. To me, this is beautiful. I think that's the most lucid, existential, important moment.

But honestly the most entertaining moments for me were with the Stingers – Ryan Carron '27 and Chris Clyne '27 as comic relief snipers. I had the most fun shooting those scenes, the most fun editing them, and if anything that's an indicator to me that I should be pursuing something a little more comedic in the future.

AC: So the next project will be a comedy.

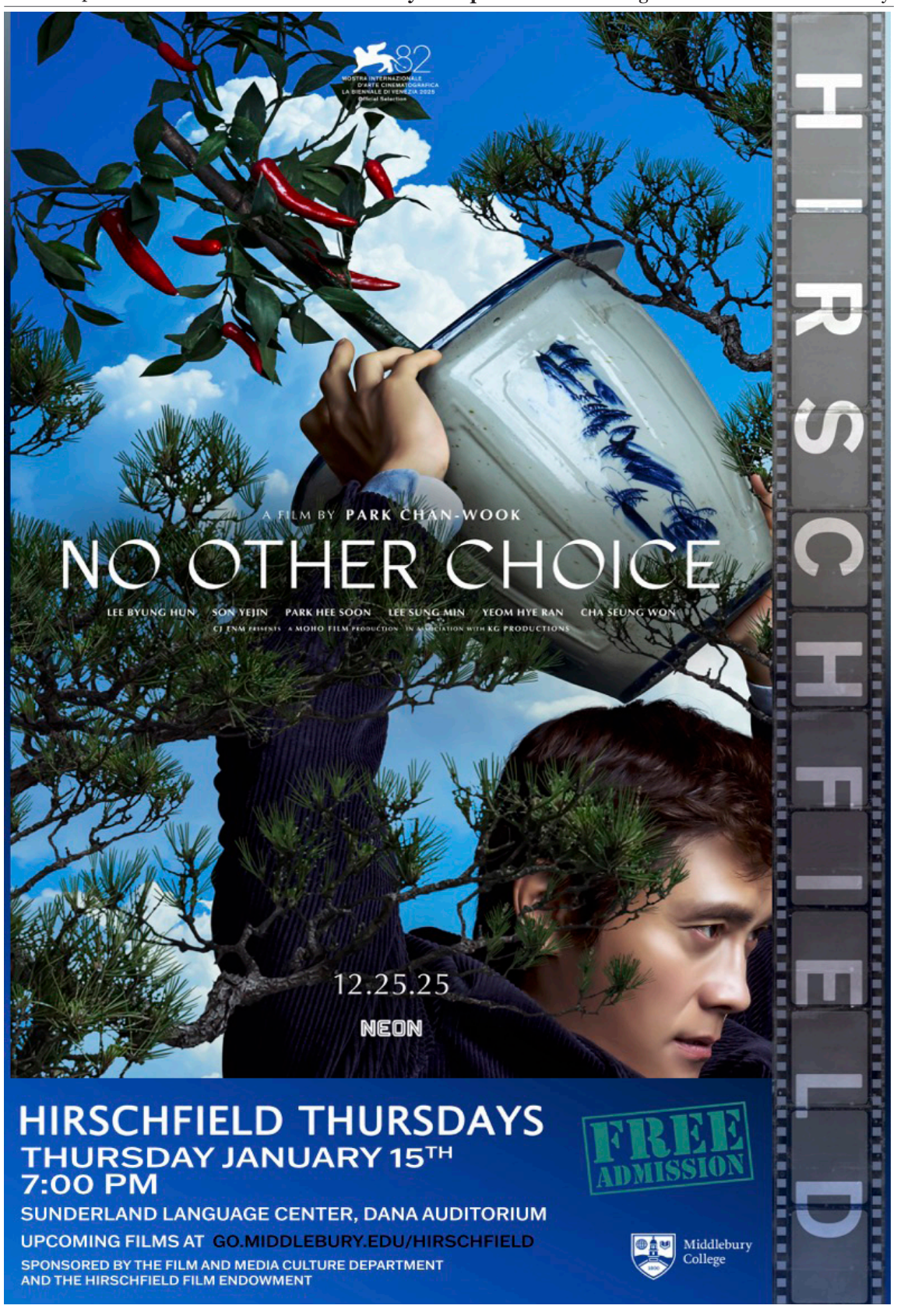
JD: Perhaps, if this was a tragedy the next will be a comedy.

AC: I'm looking forward to it.

Editor's Note: This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

COURTESY PHOTOS/JOEY DISORBO

1. The cast and crew of "Enovys" on set last January. 2. Crew ice breaks before filming. 3. Georgia Crosby '25.5 in a bloody aftermath.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MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2025
Official Selection
A FILM BY PARK CHAN-WOOK
NO OTHER CHOICE
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CJ ENM PRESENTS A MOHO FILM PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH KG PRODUCTIONS
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MEN'S BASKETBALL DROPS OPENING NESCAC GAME AGAINST #1 TRINITY

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

COURTESY PHOTO/ STOCKTON PHOTO

Senior Edward Witherington '26 made two three-point shots in Middlebury's game against Trinity last Friday.

With about two seconds remaining in the first half, the Panthers turned over the ball near Trinity's three-point line. The Bantams' guard bolted forward with the ball, and as the buzzer pierced through Pepin Gymnasium, he launched a shot from the blue "M" at the center circle. With the buzzer still ringing, the ball swished through the Middlebury basket, and the Trinity bench erupted. In one continuous run, from turnover to shot to celebration, the Trinity guard raucously strode off the court and into the locker room.

The Middlebury men's basketball team hosted their first NESCAC game of the season on Jan. 9, facing top-ranked Trinity College. The Bantams' half-court shot saw Middlebury trail 45–27 heading into intermission, and although demoralizing, the shot did not fully reflect the state of the game at that point.

Middlebury and Trinity started off well-matched, battling hard and trading points for the first several minutes. What the game lacked in quality, however, was made up for in sheer hustle and aggression. Both teams spent substantial time on the ground fighting for possession.

Regardless, the Panthers still showed flashes of their talent in the opening stages of the game. Three-point shots from Edward Witherington '26 got the Middlebury student section going, while the players' physical strength in the paint served as a reminder that Trinity would have to work particularly hard to keep Middlebury's scorers at bay.

Middlebury's struggles began with an 18–8 Trinity scoring run that saw the Panthers quickly trail by 11 points. Repeated turnovers left the team scrambling back on defense — a substantial error facing any team, let alone against the nation's first-ranked DIII squad — and undisciplined defense gave Trinity repeated chances at the free throw line. First year guard Donovan Lee '29 scored from three to reduce the Panthers' deficit with two minutes remaining, but the team was unable to score again before the end of the first half. Trinity recorded nine unanswered points to lead Middlebury by 18 entering the break.

The Panthers began the second half with better defensive organization and intensity, holding Trinity's extended scoring runs at bay. The game was less frenzied, with fewer turnovers, less time spent wrestling for the ball, more fluid passing and disciplined play from both teams. Nonetheless, a 13–8 Trinity sequence saw the guests lead by 20 with one quarter remaining.

Sparked by a jumpshot from Ian Murray '27, Middlebury began to chip away at Trinity's advantage with their best scoring run of the game. The difference fell to 16 points, although Trinity promptly restored a 20-point lead. Throughout the second half, Trinity relied on their three-point shooters to undo any progress the Panthers made. As a team, Trinity made 40.9% of their three-point field goal attempts. In comparison, Middlebury only made 20%.

An 8-5 Middlebury scoring run temporarily restored the energy levels in Pepin, but it was too late for a comeback. Trinity won 79–62, leaving Middlebury 6-6 on the season after Friday's game. For Trinity, the victory brought their undefeated streak to 13.

Murray led the Panthers' scoring with 18 points, posting his eighth game in double-digits. Next was Witherington with 12 points, including two three-pointers from the first half. Notably, Middlebury faced the Bantams without standout first-year Dominick Ducree '29 due to an injury. Ducree leads the Panthers in average points per game, having already notched four 20-point games this season. In Middlebury's Dec. 28 game against Wheaton, Ducree scored six three-pointers on his way to 27 points total.

Facing the current number one-ranked team and reigning NCAA DIII basketball champion, a 17-point loss was a tough but acceptable result. Regardless of the rankings and hype, Middlebury approached the game with a focus on their own performance.

"The ranking and [Trinity's] accomplishments over the last few years played no effect in our preparation… our improvement and our growth were the only things that truly mattered," Head Coach Matthew Goldsmith said.

That focus seemed to pay off. Even without their top scorer, Middlebury scored 47.1% of their field goal shots, the highest sum of any opponent against Trinity this season. Further, despite the deficit at the break, Middlebury returned to the court with renewed effort and connection, outscoring their opponent in the second half.

Looking forward, the Middlebury men's basketball team will need more defensive discipline and fewer turnovers; "continual growth and improvement," as coach Goldsmith described. Ducree's return will also provide much-missed offensive strength. Having lost their subsequent match against Wesleyan University on Saturday, Jan. 10, the Panthers now sit at 0–2 against NESCAC opponents. Two additional NESCAC games await this weekend— two crucial chances, both away from home, for the team to decide what kind of season they want to have.

RESILIENT WOMEN'S HOCKEY SQUAD BESTS CONNECTICUT COLLEGE TWICE

By THEO MANIATIS
Sports Editor

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Olivia Gordon '28 assisted the tying goal in Friday's game against Connecticut College.

"Resilient" is the word head coach Bill Mandigo uses to characterize his hockey team. It's an apt description. Last weekend, Middlebury women's hockey took down Connecticut College in two comeback wins, winning 2–1 on Friday night and 4–2 less than 24 hours later. Both games were close, but Middlebury was the better team throughout.

In the first game, Connecticut College made the first bid from a one-timer on the left side of the crease, but goalie Sophia Will '26 responded with a sprawling save. Middlebury dominated but couldn't score for the rest of the period, notching eight shots within the final three minutes.

A Camels player netted the first goal with 3:27 left in the second period, skating around a Middlebury defender and burying the puck top shelf. The Panthers entered the third down a goal, but it was familiar territory for a team that has clawed back to win in several games this season.

"They've been really good about not getting down if they don't score first or if they fall behind," Mandigo said. "I come back to being resilient; there's no quit, they're going to keep fighting."

That's precisely what happened: they kept fighting. Liv Fernandez '27 tied the game early in the third off a feed from Olivia Gordon '28. Ten minutes later, they claimed the lead from a shorthanded goal from Alison Giebler '28 — her first goal in navy and white. Almost as soon as the penalty had started, Giebler intercepted a pass in the zone, chipping it off the wall and setting herself free. The crowd rose to their feet as Giebler dashed down the length of the ice. She faked right before slotting the puck into the net, and a chorus of cheers erupted from Kenyon Arena.

One of the arena's most redeeming features is that it brings together people who might not usually find themselves in the same space. Like with most Middlebury competitions, students, staff, and parents are all there. But what's special about hockey is that it also attracts many people from the town.

"The townspeople love coming to hockey games. It's always been that way for the men, and I think the women have gotten more and more in the last 18 years," Mandigo said. "There's certain people who come, they love coming, they have their seats."

On Saturday, the Panthers once again found themselves trailing by one in the second period.

"We'd love to not be in that position every time we play, but it seems to be a trend this year," Assistant Coach Emily McNamara joked.

Regardless, a Middlebury comeback felt inevitable. With 2:15 remaining in the second period, the Panthers went on the power play. Avery McInerny '26 picked up the puck behind the net, setting up Alyssa Frazier's '29 one-time effort into the bottom right corner. Not taking their time to capture the lead, Middlebury scored again 20 seconds later. Giebler skated over from near the Panther bench, evading a couple defenders before skillfully wristing the puck into the top right corner.

Undeterred by conceding two goals in quick succession, Conn tied it early in the third. Their forward battled through a couple Panthers before slotting the puck into the bottom left corner. It wasn't a pretty goal, and even the Connecticut player seemed surprised that it had gone in. Panther goalie Will tapped her stick against the crossbar in frustration, a tactic she uses to refocus.

"It's more of a mental reset. In the moment, you're like 'crap,' but you've got to flush it and reset it," Will said. Soon after, Conn skated down ice with a three-on-one, but Will smothered their attempt on goal.

After that save, Middlebury reclaimed control. Olivia McManus '27 made it 3–2 with seven minutes left, making use of their one-skater advantage on the power player. Then, playing short-handed, Frazier picked off a pass and moved left across the ice. Making a cross-ice pass, forward Caroline Thomas '29 then guided the puck into the empty net.

"We tend to kill in a pretty aggressive manner, and occasionally you get some positive bounces that come from that," McNamara said about the team's success on penalty kills.

Conn brought on an extra skater in an attempt to salvage the game, but was caught with too many players on the ice. Their coach, with frustration boiling over from effectively losing twice within 24 hours, started arguing with the refs and waved her clipboard wildly. She was relegated to watching Middlebury skate out the rest of the game.

The Panthers moved to 9–1–2 after the two wins and are now ranked fourth in the nation. Next weekend they face #2 Amherst College, possibly the biggest test for the team so far this season.

Despite the pending challenge, Will feels good about her team.

"I feel really confident in this group and what we bring every day…everyone shows up and tries to bring their all, even if it's not their best day," Will said.

As the Middlebury women's hockey team approaches their pair of away games against the Mammoths, they might not even have a choice. Their best days will be needed to return home victorious.

& FIELD: MIDDLEBURY THROWERS AND JUMPERS EXCEL AT SNOWFLAKE INVITATIONAL

By KANAN CLIFfORD
Sports Editor

In 2019, & Juliet opened on Broadway, twisting the Shakespearean classic Romeo & Juliet by focusing on Juliet: What would have happened if she lived? Juliet deserves her own story, as does the Middlebury field team.

On Jan. 10, Middlebury track & field debuted its 2026 indoor season at the Middlebury Snowflake Invitational with a bang. Andreas Panagos '28 won the men's weight throw at 14.36 meters, Emily Rubio '26 paced the whole field with wins in the women's long jump (5.24m) and 60-meter hurdles (9.37 seconds), and Lilly Wurtz '26 set a Middlebury indoor record in shotput with a 12.63 meter heave.

Track & field's indoor season culminates in the indoor championship, taking place in late February in Boston, before the outdoor season begins. Then the team sprints towards outdoor NCAA championships in May. But it all begins with three home meets to kick off J-Term.

Because of the Virtue Field House's extensive facilities (track, turf, jump pits, pole vault area), Middlebury is uniquely positioned to host indoor events, allowing the track & field team to start off the season from the (indoor) comfort of Vermont.

"Having these home meets to start J-Term really helps bring the whole team together. We can cheer each other on in these small-meet settings," captain thrower Julia Tulimieri '26 said. Tulimieri herself won the women's weight throw with a meet personal best of 14.67 meters.

Head coach Martin Beatty echoed the sentiment of unity, refuting the notion of track & field as an individual sport.

"We don't want silos," Beatty said. "This is a team sport."

In a sport that relies so heavily on team chemistry, it's no surprise that Beatty had other coaches telling him that last year's men's squad was "so tight-knit [that] they knew Middlebury would come out on top of the NESCAC championships."

COURTESY PHOTO / GEORGE MADISON
Leading Middlebury's dominant pole vault performance, Caleb Smith '27 clears the bar with ease.

Having a semester to train for the track & field season can be a major benefit, especially since many high school competitors don't have access to indoor throwing events. Among these is the weight throw, which closely resembles hammer throwing in outdoor track. For Middlebury's first year throwers, these initial three meets give them a chance to settle in, Tulimieri explained.

During the outdoor season, high school throwers who compete in hammer throwing wield a long chain attached to a 16 pound ball for men and 8.8 lbs for women. In comparison, the weight throw has a shorter chain and much heavier weight — 35 lbs for men and 20 lbs for women.

Weight throws have the same diameter circle of 2.135 meters — the circular area from which athletes perform throwing events — as hammer throws, but are often done mechanically in three turns instead of four, requiring greater core and torso strength. Because most states don't have the weight throw, most freshmen throwers come in without any experience in the event.

"I had about a month of practice with the weight throw," thrower Adam Ferreira '29 said, who is also a defensive back on the football team. Regardless, Ferreira made it past his flight and into finals as a complete newcomer to the event.

Now over to jumps. Two first year jumpers, Chase Hoey '29 and Lily Haskins Vaughan '29, the future of Middlebury women's high jump, finished T2 with 1.58 meter jumps. "They're both from Western Massachusetts and grew up jumping against each other," Coach Beatty said.

Middlebury proceeded to dominate the pole vault, as Caleb Smith '27 took home top honors for the men (4.25m) and Claire Miller '26 crushed the competition on the women's side (2.95m).

It might be early in the campaign, but the Middlebury squad will look to build on their momentum through the end of J-Term and into the spring semester. Their story has just begun, and it looks promising.

MEN'S SQUASH GOES 2-1 AT HOME

By GEORGE MADISON
Contributing Writer

The Bostwick Family Squash Center was packed with spectators on Friday night, Jan. 9, as the Panthers introduced their starting lineup ahead of the match against Navy. Middlebury Men's Squash entered the weekend as the 17th seed in the NCAA with a 2-2 record. They faced 15th-ranked Navy, 16th-ranked Franklin and Marshall College and 23rd-ranked Dickinson College.

With the goal of making the top-12 bracket at the College Squash Association (CSA) nationals in March, the triple-header would be a crucial test for the Panthers' season.

"The mindset was to establish ourselves after the break. We wanted to prove that we were fit enough to play the triple-header and come strong throughout," captain Caleb Boateng '26 said.

Friday's match against Navy was intense from the get-go. Nico Brown '29 and Boateng secured wins, while the Navy team claimed victories at #9 and #2. Tied at 2–2, Navy gained momentum and recorded hard-fought wins in the first and fourth positions to establish a lead.

The Panthers responded with a win from Ronin Kaplan '27, who swept his opponent at #8. Navy then put a Middlebury win out of reach with a four-game win in the third slot.

"We felt like we left something on the table there," Gabe Feinstein '29 said, reflecting on the Navy match. "We really let ourselves feel the pain of that loss, knowing that we didn't want to feel that again."

The Panthers had a short turnaround as they looked to rebound in Saturday's CSA match of the week against Franklin and Marshall.

"As much as the match could have gone any way, we know things happen," Boateng said. "And, you know, tomorrow's a new day. And it's another day to take down a giant, F&M, who we've lost to. We had to lock in for that."

Middlebury came out firing on Saturday, with first-year Naum Lekovic '29 sweeping his match at #9. After dropping the #2 spot, the Panthers took full control with a sweep from Boateng and a 3–1 victory from first-year Brown.

Feinstein entered his match at the top of the ladder with the Panthers up 3–1.

"Every single match, regardless of how much of an underdog I am, I'm still going to give it my all, and I know that if I can find a way to win, that's really going to be valuable to the team. So when I went out onto the court, I just wanted to give it my all," Feinstein said.

Feinstein quickly racked up 11–5 and 11–6 wins in the first two games before dropping the next two games 11–8 and 12–10. In the fifth, he held strong and secured a 12–10 win, putting the Panthers decisively in the lead, 4–1.

COURTESY PHOTO / GEORGE MADISON
David Zhao '27 in action for the Panthers.

Kian Kardestuncer '26, Kaplan and Theo Kogan '26 won their respective matches to officially secure the Panthers' 7–2 victory.

In the final matchup of the weekend against Dickinson College on Sunday, Jan. 11, Middlebury dominated from the start. Except in the #1 game, the Panthers swept eight of nine matches to finish the weekend 2–1.

The Middlebury men's squash program will go back into battle next weekend with another triple-header at home against Bowdoin, Bates and Colby, with all three squads currently ranked in the top 25.

"These three-match weekends are just really tough mentally. Last year, we lost to [Colby] 5–4, and it was insanely tight," Brown said. "So I think that having that on Sunday after all those other matches will be motivation that keeps us going."

To be sure, the Panthers will need all the motivation — and sheer endurance — they can muster next weekend to extend their now-winning record.

WORSHIPPING SOUND AT AMBIENT CHURCH

By NORAH KHAN
News Editor

Supposedly, writing about music is like dancing about architecture — but what about music that is equally architecture and sound?

Over Thanksgiving break, I had the opportunity to experience one of my favorite ambient albums live, "Ambient 3: Day of Radiance," a collaboration between historic artists Laraaji and Brian Eno.

The concert, held at the Asbury First United Methodist Church in Rochester, NY, was through Ambient Church, an organization that brings sound artists to non-traditional spaces, providing audiences with audio-visual immersions. Established in 2016, CEO and founder Brian Sweeney aims to facilitate "collective peak experiences through the soundscapes of modern contemplative, otherworldly, and universal music."

It makes sense that Laraaji is one of their chosen collaborators; his impact on the ambient world is nothing short of prolific, with a career that has spanned across decades, making him a central figure in ambient and new age music. His long, meditative soundscapes are built from electronically modified zither, hammered dulcimer, kalimba, synthesizers and voice, often enriched with natural sounds.

Laraaji's live performance with Ambient Church celebrated the 45th anniversary of his landmark collaboration with Eno.

After pursuing acting and stand-up comedy in New York, a turn towards Eastern mysticism and methods of healing led him to develop the mystical style that caught the attention of Brian Eno in Washington Square Park in the late 1970s.

Eno is known as one of the pioneers of ambient and electronic music, having contributed to the genres as both a producer and artist for over six decades. Laraaji later went on to work with Eno, creating "Ambient 3: Day of Radiance" (1980) — often referred to as one of the defining works of the genre and the album I had the pleasure of hearing live.

The album spans roughly 49 minutes and features five tracks. The first side of the record, "The Dance," is energizing and bright. The other side, "Meditation," lives up to its name, leading you into a gentle descent into a steady, pensive rhythm.

First released as a part of Eno's Edition EG project, the album remains a cornerstone of the ambient and new age genre, merging Laraaji's unique zither with shimmering cascades of resonance that continues to find a place with listeners of all generations. It's a body of work that I continuously come back to and share with close people in my life.

"Ambient 3" was named by Pitchfork as one of the best ambient albums in this comprehensive list of 50 selections to cut your teeth on if you are new to the genre.

Since his collaboration with Eno, Laraaji has since released dozens of albums, from early home-recorded meditation tapes to expansive collaborations with other prolific artists. Beyond performance, he is known worldwide for conducting laughter meditation workshops — something you quickly make sense of once you hear the joy his music creates.

He recently collaborated with indie folk band Big Thief on their newest album, "Double Infinity," providing vocals and instrumentals on the track "Grandmother."

His performance was unlike any other concert I have attended. Ambient Church takes three already incredible things — music, lights, and spiritual architecture — and brings them together into one immersive experience. Each show works in tandem with the church's structure to design a light show in sync with the musical performance. It is as much a visual show as an audio one.

It's been years since I've stepped foot in a church (the Middlebury Chapel doesn't quite count in my book) so I immersed myself in the environment of Asbury First.

My relationship with religion is one that began with the family unit and, like many people my age, drifted apart as I have gotten older. Churches have always fascinated me, not quite for the messages — I tended to get easily distracted at mass as a child — but rather the architecture. Curved arches, detailed carvings, smooth oak wood, brilliantly intricate stained glass — all fixtures that seem to be unique to churches. Nowadays, it's rare that I actually find myself within these buildings.

The opportunity to engage with sound in such an unconventional space was a welcome opportunity to reflect on the atmospheric roots of ambient music.

Lararaji performed the entirety of Ambient 3 alongside Arji OceAnanda, a frequent collaborator and musician in her own right. The two built upon layers and layers of sound, utilizing chimes, gourd-like instruments and recorded noise to execute the beauty of the original project.

Laraaji performed his landmark album "Ambient 3: Day of Radiance" alongside Arji OceAnanda this past November, celebrating 45 years of its release.

NORAH KHAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

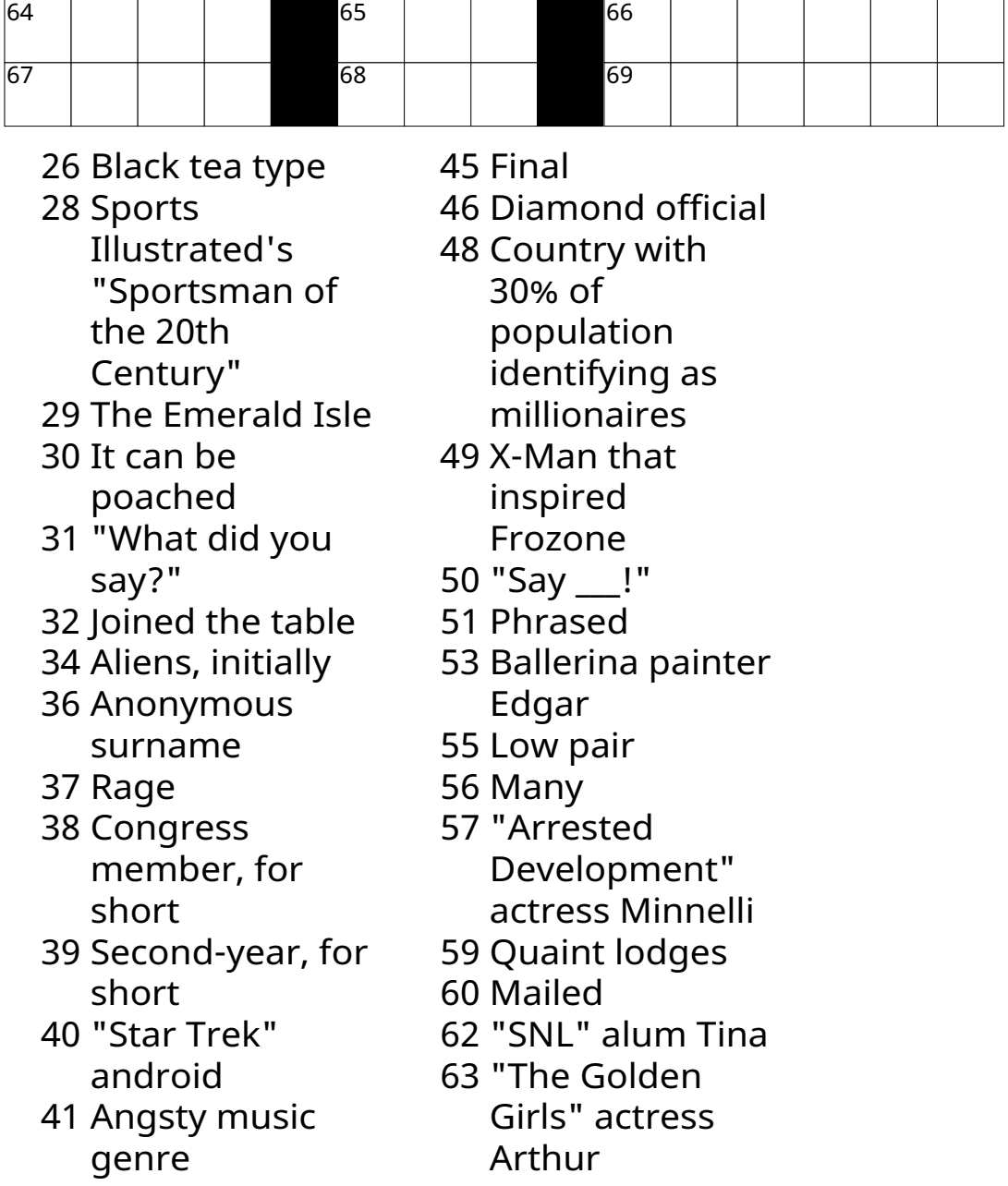
The light aspect of the show was equally divine as the music. Hues of blue and green swallowed the dark wood of the church walls, forming organic structures all around the audience. Oceans of light swirled around the musicians. A large circular window at the center of the church was utilized, its round shape providing a spherical structure for the light designs to interact with. The light was enchantingly beautiful, and yet, I found myself closing my eyes to sit with the sound and isolate my focus.

My mother, who had never heard of Laraaji or Ambient Church before the performance, described it as "an incredibly meditative experience." We left the show feeling light and relaxed, and all the stressors that had been weighing on my mind before seemed to no longer really matter.

There's something so important and transformative about experiencing live music with other people — all together, dedicated to enjoying the same sound.

Drop an Octave

Egan Turner



ACROSS

1 Malian capital
7 NHL tiebreaker periods
10 "The Substance" actress Moore
14 Leveled off
15 "Sike!"
16 Beasts of burden
17 Put an end to
18 A magician's deceptive skill
20 Ring-shaped island
21 "Twilight" protagonist
22 Very, in Valencia
23 Better than never
24 .
25 Upper-left key
27 Cargo-carrying locomotive
29 Lin-Manuel Miranda musical
33 Runner-up
35 Water, in Oaxaca
36 Middlebury's oldest a capella group, and a hint to 18-Across, 27-Across, 29-Across, 44-Across, 47-Across, and 61-Across
42 Cookie first released in 1912
43 Religion with 1.9 billion followers
44 Adults only
47 Proton mass + neutron mass + electron mass
52 Topping for Hawaiian pizza
53 65-Across *2
54 This puzzle's missing piece, in Spanish
55 "She's So High" singer Bachman
58 Went undercover
60 Contemptuous expression
61 Olympic sport featuring snatches
63 Smiled from ear to ear
64 Flow slowly
65 53-Across/2
66 Place in a protective box
67 "Don't go!"
68 Suffix for lion and count
69 Made amends

DOWN

1 On ___ of
2 Highest-grossing film of all time
3 First National League player to hit 500 home runs
4 Moose feature
5 Ship part
6 Quirky
7 Beginning
8 Highway fee
9 Poached
10 Play-___
11 Big test
12 Course catalog?
13 Before 500?
19 Go without food
21 Miniature trees
24 "Lupin" protagonist Assane
26 Black tea type
28 Sports Illustrated's "Sportsman of the 20th Century"
29 The Emerald Isle
30 It can be poached
31 "What did you say?"
32 Joined the table
34 Aliens, initially
36 Anonymous surname
37 Rage
38 Congress member, for short
39 Second-year, for short
40 "Star Trek" android
41 Angsty music genre
45 Final
46 Diamond official
48 Country with 30% of population identifying as millionaires
49 X-Man that inspired Frozone
50 "Say ___!"
51 Phrased
53 Ballerina painter Edgar
55 Low pair
56 Many
57 "Arrested Development" actress Minnelli
59 Quaint lodges
60 Mailed
62 "SNL" alum Tina
63 "The Golden Girls" actress Arthur